LTR Jack Naughton, IBM.

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6 Dec 77

Mr. Jack Naughton
IBM
1 West Broadway
White Plains, NY 10601

Dear Mr. Naughton:

If I got your name right, you were the person who seemed to get angry at some of my remarks when I spoke at IBM a few weeks ago under Bob Burian's auspices. I have thought over our exchange, and I really feel I must clear up some misunderstandings.

I think you thought I meant things in a rather different way. My digs at IBM, and kindly references to Marvin Minsky and his playmates, caused you to say that if his kind of people got serious they would have to become businesslike too, and thus be like IBM. At least this is the impression of your remarks that has come to me on thinking them over.

My digs at IBM, though, had nothing whatever to do with corporate style, or dress, or form of organization. Indeed, I think that IBMM has invented an extraordinarily powerful and flexible new system of management.

What I was saying was that the people who play with computers, like the MIT artificial-intelligence crowd, represent the customers of tomorrow; and to sell this new market it becomes necessary to think like them. You cannot sell skateboards as if they were forklifts. An industrial way of thinking about computers is no preparation whatever for this new market.

And my criticism of IBM has always been chiefly based, not on the clothes or the songbooks, but on the restriction of what users can do with their equipment. A strategy which cannot be continued in these new markets.

I appreciated your comments at the talk, and I may be overinterpreting some of them; it is just that I hate to sow confusion.

Merry Christmas,

Ted Nelson